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IN THE PATH OF THE GLEAM

ABBIE CLEVELAND BENJAMIN



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IN THE PATH OF THE GLEAM

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ABBIE CLEVELAND BENJAMIN



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IN THE PATH OF THE GLEAM

FORWARD, AMERICA!

What is the call that, overnight,
Has wrought this change throughout our land?
A land of plenteous peace, we lay —
A nation armed to fight, we stand.
Our Country calls — and far and wide,
We greet her thrilling clarion-cry
“To Arms!” because our nation *stands*
For justice, and for Liberty! —

Yes, fight we will, if fight we must
To hurl this Thing from Freedom's path
That mocks us with its deviltries,
And goads a world to righteous wrath.
Fling wide our banner to the breeze!
“Blest Stars and Stripes, ‘how fair ye be’!
Once more beneath your folds we'll strike
For principle, and Liberty!”

“You shielded us in days of peace;
As symbol of a nation's Creed,
Go forward, and, with eyes undimmed,
Your legions answer to your need.”
America, God bless her! stands
Once more arrayed on land and sea,
To fight — Once more God grant us strength —
To fight for Right and Liberty! —

OUT WEST

There's a great big world of difference in this life
out on the plains,

And the life I used to know and love the best —
There's a great big lot of difference in the way you
learn to think

When you've lived as long as I have in the West.
There's a wondrous satisfaction in the vastness of
it all —

In the vigorous Western wind — untrammelled —
free —

You learn to live more freely for the freedom that
it gives,

There is nothing like this Western life to me.

Oh, the pink and silver evenings, and the golden
perfect morns,

Not a tree to shut the sky-line from your sight,
Like a wondrous Eastern poem, soft unfolding to
your view

Is the magic of the morning and the night,
With the long blue Western mountains standing
clear against the sky.

With the crevice where the cañon ought to be,
And the far wide desert reaches lying silent in
between

There is nothing like this Western land to me.

There is mesquite on the desert and the grease-wood
and the sage,

The cat-claw's dainty perfume fills the air,

In the Path of the Gleam

As we jog along the high road with our eyes on far
Gomez,
We wonder if the East would look so fair —
I have seen the plains in winter white and shimmering with the snow,
When every bush showed fairy sorcery,
I have seen them in the summer when the blasting
South wind blows —
There is nothing like this Western land to me.

I have heard the coyotes barking in the silence of
the night,
Like a pack of hungry wolves I've heard them call,
It makes you feel how far away — the City's stirring
life,
And I like it — that's the strangest thing of all,
And the fine, great-hearted people, with their wholesome
views and ways,
With their frank ingenuous manners, good to see,
Absorbed with simple pleasures and the honest work
of day,
There is nothing like this Western land to me.

When I think of Western bigness, there is one, it
seems to me,
Who embodies most the spirit of this land,
A nature strong and fearless — her strong and simple
creed
To do the best with brain, and heart and hand,
Never the hands too full of work, the day too full
of care,
No matter at what cost of rest it be —

In the Path of the Gleam

To see and straightway answer when another stands
in need,
These are the things the West has taught to me!

There is nothing of the strain of cities here,
The nervous quest that warps the thing it feeds,
Convention's mask -- unheeded -- falls away,
The soul has found the freedom that it needs,
The purple-dark abysses of the night --
The old-time call that lures you like the sea,
The solitudes -- the silence -- these are best --
There is nothing like this Western land to me.

Early Work

SUNSET

Just a peep at the Western sky —

A Southern sky — at the close of day,
Bathed in the glow of the setting sun,
Yet tinged with the gold of a lingering ray.

Large masses of cloud in billowy folds
Embanked against the horizon there,
Their margins delicately traced with gold,
Are superbly tinted in colors rare.

From the deepening crimson to seashell pink,
The shadowy purple to a snowy white —
With such shadings of lavender, blue and gray,
The last sweet kiss of the waning light.

Far up toward the center — just barely touched,
Small rose-flushed clouds go sailing past
Like tiny ships on a tranquil sea,
A silent sea — deep, blue and vast.

The brilliantly splendid sun sinks low,
The colors fade from the opal sky,
Already the stars have claimed the hour,
For the sun has set and the day must die.

Now the twilight reigns for a little space,
But slowly, slowly the night comes on,
Wrapping the earth in its mystical shroud
Till the light of another day is born.

The stars in their loving tenderness
Watch o'er the slumbering world —
While blinking and twinkling they wait to see
The Banners of Dawn unfurled.

SUNSET — BEHIND CLOUDS

The golden bowl has broken in the sky
And dropped its glittering treasures everywhere —
Into the clouds and on the mountain peaks,
And even in that river running there —

It was the wind that turned it upside down,
The boisterous west-wind! and he thinks it fun!
For now he's blowing all the clouds away,
And laughing at the dreadful harm he's done! —

But see! the little messenger has come,
The cool, white spirit that precedes the night;
He's gathering all the jewels in his hand,
And throwing them, quite calmly, out of sight —

Look! as he stands a-tip-toe on that cloud!
Behind the world he flings them one by one,
Down through the cool, gray dusk you see them fall,
Into the crimson casket of the sun —

And now, the last one gone, he stands quite still,
Then turns, and slowly beckons with his hand,
And twilight, coming swiftly at his call,
Draws her soft gray mantle o'er the land.

Early Work

TWILIGHT

Softly, now, the peaceful twilight
Steals upon the weary earth —
Gone the day, its troubles, cares,
Beginning with it, at its birth.

A solemn stillness reigns — all nature's
Hushed in sweet repose —
Gladly, of her rest she gives us,
Much we need it — this she knows.

Ah, how soothing is the silence!
How it calms and stills the heart.
Bids us do away with memory.
Takes possession of our thought —

How often, in this world of ours,
When sorrows, cares, oppress —
Life seems no longer beautiful
While plunged in deep distress.

Were we to open wide our hearts,
Our minds, our thoughts, our souls,
To nature's pure and blessed truths
Which freely she unfolds,

How gently she would minister
To all our wants and needs —
How tenderly she'd watch the flower
Were we to plant the seeds.

In the Path of the Gleam

Now the twilight lifts its filmy veil —
The darkness hovers near
To clasp again in close embrace
The earth so old and dear!

At last the Black Knight claims his own —
His influence — his power —
And nature slumbers on his breast
In this — her resting hour.

ECHOES

Soft sighs the Summer breeze
Whispering low!
Croons a love-song to my heart
Of long ago!

Stir of leaves and running stream,
Silvery sweet!
Wafting dream thoughts through my brain
Of love complete!

Gray light, and fading day,
Cool and calm!
Wake sad longings in my soul
Tender, warm!

Call of birds, and pealing bell
Strangely clear!
Peace, my heart, thou dare not venture
Thoughts too dear!

Fall of night, and fluttering wings
O'er my head!
Away pale shadows of past years,
Love is dead!

Early Work

WHAT IS LIFE?

Life, at the most, is but a slender thread
The which we twine and twine and twine
Into skeins — some ragged, rough and snarled;
While often they are even, smooth and fine.

'Tis easier, we think, to make them coarse —
'Twill make no difference when we're dead —
But oh! we do not know how much depends
Upon the twining of this little thread!

Each hour's work, each measure of the skein
That's placed or thrown upon the Hands of Time,
But draws us nearer to, or farther from,
The Everlasting Life — that Life Sublime!

If, when, at last, we look upon our work
We find — ah! then we weep! — the tangles
there,
Though we can ne'er unravel them ourselves,
Is this the time to listen to despair?

Oh, no! if we repent of our mistakes,
And try from this time on to do our best,
Though all the threads till now are mixed and
snarled,
How even and how straight will be the rest!

In the Path of the Gleam

And in this way we make our Skein of Life —
The thread is small — we're often sorely vexed —
Yet steadily we wind and wind and wind,
Till lo! at last it breaks! and then what next?

Ah, then upon the Loom of Awful Mystery
Our little skein of earthly work is laid,
And through the countless years of dread uncertainty
Is woven — and a Heavenly garment made —

A spotless garment, if the skein was good,
Of Truth, and Joy, and Purity, and Love,
And this is our reward — the promised gift
To those whom God shall take with Him,—
above.

And, so, each day, each hour, each minute e'en,
We're adding something to th' increasing skein —
And this we know — each knot means something
lost,
Each perfect measure, an immortal gain.

Early Work

SPRING

The Spring has come resplendent,
Ancient Goddess! and she brings
As a tribute to her coming
What a host of lovely things!

See the meadows draped with flowers,
And the clear, blue sky above,
Within the woodland in the distance
Hear the birds' sweet song of love.

Now the breezes, soft are murmuring
In the towers of spacious trees,
List a moment to the distant,
Drowsy humming of the bees.

What a world of life and color
In these woods and fields around.
Surely Nature had not hidden
All this glory in the ground!

Do you see the violets sleeping there,
Beside that rippling stream?
Watch the sunlight stealing through the leaves
'Twill wake them from their dream.

Proudly the daisies lift their heads
To the Sun — Golden Orb — in the sky!
While afar — what rapture! a bird's song floats
In a tremulous ecstasy.

In the Path of the Gleam

Sweet is his matin hymn, joyful and long,
A rapturous thankfulness, poured into song,
But sweeter than this at the close of day
Are the wonderful tones of his evening lay.

Soft and low he begins his song,
And the beautiful melody floats along
Like a dream through the stillness, a peaceful lay
That vibrates and softens and dies away!

Ah, Spring, thou hast surely an Artist's touch,
And who but thyself could boast such powers?
Rather, oh Goddess, we re-produce
Those exquisite tints and call them ours.

Fairest art thou of the Seasons all.
The gentlest Messenger God could find
To bring new life to a desolate world!
To bring new thoughts to a people's mind!

Early Work

THE ROSE'S SECRET

Sweet, gentle flower, with your face so fair,
Are you dissatisfied over there
With your petals closed, and your head bowed low?
Is it somewhere else that you wish to grow?

Perhaps I could help you, if I knew —
I am sure there is something I could do —
Two mornings now when your nook I've sought
I have found a tear within your heart!

You wanted to hide it, unhappy rose!
But — your petals unfolded, — your heart lay
bare —

And just for a moment — you held it so close!
I looked and I saw it glistening there!

With my very own lips I brushed it away,
And something to help you I tried to say —
But wretched and lonely you closed up tight —
And that tear still lies in your heart to-night.

Yet your face is strangely sweet and calm,
And your perfume as soft and rich and warm
As it was when first I found you, dear,
When you smiled and said you liked it here.

I don't understand how those petals fair,
Could hold such a thing as a tear drop there.
Your soul is too chaste, little rose, I fear,
To live in this worldly atmosphere.

In the Path of the Gleam

The rose very quietly lifted her head
And smiled, as with sorrowful voice she said:
Sweet maid, you are wise and your heart is good.
I could tell you my secret if I would,
But 'tis useless — you would not understand;
For what do you know of our flower land?

Just bear this in mind as through life you go
That you're often deceived when you think you
 know —
From the sea when it curls in a smiling wreath,
Who dreams of the wrecks which lie beneath?

So think not to judge from the lips that smile,
Nor the eyes that can sparkle a little while —
Though both may be urged by the heart within;
That heart, oh, too often, is suffering.

Early Work

ON THE SEASHORE

Come, little wave, confess, confess,
You have a secret — this I know —
Don't be afraid — Oh, now you're trying to tease —
Come tell it me — I know 'tis sure to please —

Ah, here you are, just bubbling o'er with fun —
Now are you ready — quite — to let me hear —
Well be right still, and then you must explain —
What! Are you going to run away again?

I think you fear to trust me — is it so?
And yet you tell the Seashells on the beach
Who ever sing your praises day and night
Unto themselves — such pretty things you teach —

You wonder at my knowing this, I see,
Yet often have I strolled along the shore
And held the little seashells to my ear
To listen to their imitation roar —

I love the sound — 'tis full of mystery —
And how I long to know of what they sing —
Oh, won't you tell me just a little bit?
I think you might — you're such a tiny thing!

But no, I will not beg you, little wave,
You're loyal to your trust — The mighty deep
Has tried you well — has perfect confidence —
For you have said the secret you would keep.

In the Path of the Gleam

You can tell it to the seashells on the beach
For you know they'll not betray you — no, not
one —

Then go your happy way, you laughing wavelet —
So refreshing, bright and sweet to look upon!

TO "THE MAIDEN ALL FORLORN"

(SCHOOL DAYS)

Once in the gray of an early dawn —
Just what was his reason I cannot say —
A long, thin creature all tattered and torn,
Did over the hill-tops wend his way.

The air was fresh and the day was bright,
And he walked with a step so quick and light,
And he thought while he flourished his cane on
high,
His youth had returned, he felt so spry.

He smiled and nodded and tipped his hat
To an invisible something — he knew not what!
And then — we must pardon his mood so gay,
And remember 'twas spring, and 'twas early May! —

He looked toward the east at the sun's advance,
And was seized with insane desire to dance!
So he threw off his hat and loosened his joints
And he held out his coat by its raggedy points.
And over the meadow to meet the day
He frolicked and danced like a lamb at play.

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His coat-tails flapped in the morning breeze,
And he felt very stiff in his very old knees,
But he skipped on, regardless, all merry and gay,
'Till he spied on the meadow not far away,

As blithesome a maiden as he a man,
For she, too, danced with her large milk can,
And there by her side, with a charming grace,
An attractive cow did solemnly pace.

The maid was dark and the cow was fair,
And they made such a beautiful picture there,
As they walked in the light of that early morn,
That the poor old gentleman, tattered and torn,

Paused in his antics and stared at the two,
And wondered what really was best to do,
When suddenly there before his eyes,
Under the blue of the sun-lit skies,

The maiden sat down on her stool of wood
And she did what never a maiden should,
For she peeped right under that cow at him,
And waved a hand very small and slim —

And he? he laughed as he never had done,
And started at once in a very brisk run,
— When the sight of that cow made him shake
 with fear,
For her heels were pawing the atmosphere.

And up through the air with a whirl they flew,
The bucket, the stool, and the maiden, too,—

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The man, too late to assist her now,
Vented his wrath on the terrified cow.

Just a moment, the deed was done —
He caught that cow who had started to run —
That wretched cow with the crumpled horn
That tossed the maiden all forlorn.

And then as he looked at the maiden there,
Who lay very still with a vacant stare,
He thought if she ever came back to life,
He would then and there ask her to be his wife.

For he liked her hair and he loved her nose,
And he didn't for half of a second suppose
That she'd dare to refuse him or say him nay,
For —'twas Spring you see, and 'twas early May!

So he picked up her pail and her stool of wood
And got just as close as ever he could —
Then he offered his hand to help her arise —
— An amusing twinkle came into her eyes —

And smiling, she said in a humorous way — :
“ Good morning, kind sir, it's a *lovely* day! ”—

He nearly collapsed, not a word could he speak,
His teeth, they chattered, his knees were weak,
“ Er — here is your bucket, your stool and your cow,
Is there anything else I might do just now? ”

She got very pink, and she held out her hand —
And she knew there *was* something he might demand,

In the Path of the Gleam

But he was a man and how should he know?
It was plainly her duty to tell him so.

“ I thank you, sir, for your kindly aid,
Such kindness must never go unrepaid,
For your service — and, really, I do not mind,—
You may kiss me, you know, if you feel inclined.”

Now, *I* am the man all tattered and torn,
Who once in the flush of an early morn,
Kissed that maiden all forlorn
Who was tossed by the cow with the crumpled horn.

And I write to that maid, with my heart on fire,
And ask her to ponder my great desire,
And beg her to tell me, without delay,
That she will be mine in the early May.

She may keep that cow with the crumpled horn,
But discard that look that was all forlorn —
For we'll shed no tears over milk that's spilt —
— When we live in the house that Jack built! ”—

From “ The Man All Tattered and Torn.”

MERELY A FANCY

Far, far away, in a misty dreamy land, in whose fair realm there lay no trace of human life, two spirits dwelt in perfect unity. Their presence, there united, breathed forth peace and happiness upon that guarded country. Purest music quivered from each tiny leaf that grew in the golden solitude, and all of Nature's children there, spoke but in the liquid song of poetry. The murmuring breezes loved to linger in the leafy towers of spacious trees and often, in the glowing twilight, teasingly stooped to kiss the blushing lips of infant flowers, as they curled themselves up comfortably for their night's sleep. Playful streams with rhythmic, ringing voices filled the woodlands with enchanting sound, and mirrored in their clear, crystalline depths the fair faces of woodland Psyches, that loved the musical waters they knew not why.

Upon the distant white and glistening shore that bordered this dim fairyland, the waves ran high with each other, but in play, and cast upon the coast rare gems that pave the ocean's vast and unknown plains.

A dreamy atmosphere, all breathing with perfumed incense, hung like a misty veil over the earth and water, and exquisite harmony born of soft and pleasing sound, floated in tones of sweet, weird melody, such as might have issued from those trembling reeds, that one by one, in the days of long ago, were woven into strains of perfect music

by the hands of the great god Pan. And yet, and yet, these days so beautiful, so rare, were they quite complete? These two twin spirits, as they wandered, hand in hand, through this strange, visionary realm, what were they seeking, and why the earnestness of their gaze as they looked into each other's eyes and saw there what made them fear to speak?

What undefined emotions made them tremble as, once, in the pearly twilight of a perfect day, they stood with clasped hands, and looking toward the fading glow in the West, saw a mist rise from the curling waters? What did it mean? No cloud had ever yet come to cast a shadow over this happy land, yet they smiled as they saw the mist ascend and gather. Little by little they watched it grow as it danced over the water and, step by step, they saw it nearing the peaceful shore. Now the world around them became shrouded, and with hands still clasped in mute and mutual understanding, they saw no object save each other, and the world was lost to each but in themselves. And now the white mist darkened and was blue; the mystic landscape dwindled to a thin blue smoke, and these two spirits, with hands yet locked in sympathy, rose in the midst of the smoke, and as they ascended there was a fierce and smothering fire burning within their souls. Suddenly, a bright red flame leaped up around them, and as they looked up a face infinitely tender smiled down upon them! Ah, now they understood! In the radiance of that fair face these two spirits, the one Music, the other Poetry, became as one with the flickering flame which, slowly now, smoldered

down into a spark — a spark so brilliant, so piercing that it seemed a world in itself as it hung there an instant in the heavens — and then — it fell, and lighted upon a little globe that revolved around and around in the infinite space below. There it lay and burned and there it became a divine spark that has guided that little sphere safely through all its courses until now! For this is the Birth of Love — growing out of the sublime union of Music and Poetry, it has resolved the two into itself; and now they are one — and we know that one, ah! first and last we know that one, for the great, deep heart of the Universe is Love —

A SUMMER RHAPSODY

Last of the "Early Work"

DAWN

The world is waking — for the magic breath of dawn has lifted the veil from Nature's sleeping face, and kissed her,—and she smiles, contented, in her sleep, as a drowsy child still dreaming dreams, will smile — too happy yet to wake to the full consciousness of day! O, wondrous Dawn, whose phantom fingers, stealing through the gloom, so deftly raise the heavy pall of night, that earth once more may stand revealed to human eyes! — A light breaks in the east, gray, cold and searching, touches faintly the tops of the trees and the white roads stretching indefinitely through the quiet valley, pauses for an instant at the silent river that coldly reflects its somber gleam — and finally reaches the far off line of mountains that stand out, grim and ghostly, against the twilight sky — No sound to mar the stillness of the hour! no stir of leaves or least complaint of birds to break the silence — only that wan, mysterious light moving over the earth, like a gray phantom, feeling its way carefully, relentlessly, into every corner of the sleeping world — What majesty in this moment of wonderful repose just before the breaking of the day! when all the forces of nature seem, for the time, to be lying dormant — as though a cool, compelling hand had been laid upon the great throbbing heart — and Nature, herself, while not sleeping, is deeply, profoundly at

rest! Silence and Peace, in the quiet light on the hills, in the sleeping valley, in the dark, motionless trees, and on the slow-running river that winds in and out, in and out, through the meadows and fields and loses itself in the valley beyond — But now there comes a subtle change in the air — The light in the east grows stronger — a faint breeze stirs the leaves of the trees that, one after another, take up the whispered anthem, and soon, in every direction, a gentle murmur of life is felt. A sleepy robin chirps uneasily in its nest — shakes itself — dozes a moment — then chirps again — flutters uncertainly — calls softly through the gloom — is answered afar off and then swiftly wings its way through the dense woods up into the clear sky — singing, singing as it flies — The last few, faithful little stars, grown sleepy in the misty dawn, still blink and blink at each other in the far off skies, then, one by one all silently disappear — the last signal for earth to rouse herself — and wake to greet the morn! A soft roseate flush now fills the eastern sky — spreads and deepens — and Nature, at last, thoroughly aroused, shakes off the lassitude of night and welcomes with eager smile that bright fore-glow of sunrise. The air becomes vibrant with life and sound — throughout the woods the song-birds call and chirp and chatter — and one more impetuous robin, perched on the top-most twig of a swaying maple tree, recklessly pours out his glorious *Venite* to the blue heavens above him, and then, fearful of his extravagance, darts off, like a flash, through the green meadows toward the east, and is lost in the pink splendor of the morning. Deep and

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deeper still grows that light on the horizon and with wondrous skill touches earth's lovely face, upturned and eager, until it glows with color. Far off in the distance the long, blue mountains stand clearly outlined against a faultless sky, while at their feet the river runs with renewed interest, and reflects on its smooth surface the clear blue of the heavens and one small pink cloud floating lightly in the atmosphere above. Lo, the Sun is rising, afar off there a single mountain peak has caught the first golden gleam! an expectant hush comes over the world — a moment of intense anticipation — as all the earth waits — breathless — for the Sun — that bold fore-runner of the Day!

THE LONE HOUR

O God, I cried into the starry night,
Take from my heart this burden that it bears —
Lift me above this bitter choking hurt
Help me — a child once more — to say my prayers.

This suffocating cloud that fogs my brain —
O God, it shuts the sunlight from my heart —
Help me to grope my way from out the gloom —
Help me to find that peace so dearly bought.

Life was not made for such unending strain —
Hearts were not made to crush and break like this —
Souls — were they given us, O God, to fathom pain?
And that attained, be lost in the abyss?

I have gone too far, O God, I cannot see —
My thoughts adrift — my soul is drifting too —
Bring me — a child — to Thy dear feet again —
Let me find You, O God, let me find YOU!

THE SOUL RESTIVE

O, the gray sky and the gray wastes,
And the early buds of spring!
And the aching need of the human heart
For a Beautiful — Nameless Thing!

A white road stretching beyond our sight,
Through silent spaces of desert land,
Turning and twisting and leading us on
By a force that we can't, if we would, withstand!

And the rushing wind from the far off sea,
With its burden of grave unrest,
Like the dull, deep roar of the ocean's voice,
As it rolls from the ocean's breast!

O, it answers the cry of a restless soul —
That echoing note of pain —
For the soul's insistent sorrowing call
Is heard in the wind's refrain!

And we bare our heads to the heavy breeze
And our souls to the great Unknown,
But we find no rest in wind nor sea
And we stand in the world alone!

O, the gray sky and the gray wastes,
And the buds of early spring!
And the aching void in the human heart
That has lost this Nameless Thing!

THE SOUL PASSIVE

Deep down in the heart of everything
That has come from the Master's hand
Lie the Beauty and Truth of Him who gave
And the Love of Him who planned!

And so with the souls that God has given,
For each in its silent deeps,
Apart from the world of thought and deed,
Its own pure knowledge keeps —

Keeps and gives to the heart of man,
When the man's heart stands in need,
That silent Thought
Like a voice from God,
THAT IS VERY GOD INDEED!

And the pulsing throb of the heart's unrest
Is lulled to a minor key,
As the questioning soul is filled, throughout,
With a wonderful certainty!

O, the wind with its dreary chanting,
And the sea's deep monotone,
Can never bring pain to the soul that loves,
And has sought and has found its own!

For a brooding Peace, like soft warm wings,
O'er the heart's great anguished care,
Soothes to silence the fluttering Thing,
— And we know God's hand is there!

In the Path of the Gleam

Poor, tired heart with its aching need,
And the longings it can't explain,
How restful to feel that healing touch,
And the blessed release from pain!

O, the soul's great love at the depths of all,
Wherein each doubt is stilled!
And life, with its dreams, ideals, desires,
Stands true — complete — fulfilled!

Just this to quiet the heart's distress,
That we feel such love is near!
Those wonderful, tender, enfolding wings
How they calm each foolish fear!

And the mournful voice of the ocean calls,
And the wind from the sea blows hard!
But the Soul that loves, and trusts and knows,
Is at peace with its world and God!

O, the gray sky and the gray wastes,
And the buds of coming spring!
And the great demand of the human Soul,
For Love that is EVERYTHING!

DURING A MID-NIGHT STORM

O, wind of the raging sea, Thou fearful guest! —
That beats so wildly 'gainst the light-house tower,
Tell me if the ships off Normandy —
Are gone beneath, or toiling perilously?

O, wind of the surging billows, mountain-high!
Thou hast no pity in thy angry rage —
Thou comest for naught tonight but to destroy —
Hast thou no tidings of my absent boy?

O, wind of the stormy deep, so strong, so cruel!
Be merciful to those at sea tonight —
Great God, in pity look from heaven above
And in this tempest guide the ships aright! —

TO A FRIEND —

It seems to me there's nothing in this life
So lovely as a friend to call one's own!
A "friend," I say — but by that name I mean
Far more than what, in Friendship's name, alone,
We most imply when first we use the word,
For friend, I think — and singly, mean the same —
Is whom our souls have known, and, knowing,
trust —
And trusting, love — with all the passion of Love's
flame —
For this I hold most true — Love's abstract self —
Not time, nor place nor object can remould —

In the Path of the Gleam

But — perfect in itself — must so remain —
All crystal pure — God's wisdom to uphold! —
That, wheresoever placed, we yet may know
The true from what is not, or seems to be —
And, holding the secret of love's great mysterious
self

Strengthen our hold on all eternity —
Sweet friend, what most I prize I owe to you —
This knowledge of your heart revealed in mine,—
A wondrous fullness in life's happiest hours,
More wondrous strength in grim misfortune's
time —

To know, when darkness comes, and with it, fear,
And doubts and lonely thoughts my heart oppress,
That in that darkness I can have your hand
Quick with response to every small distress,
That I can come, full confident of love,
And love's reward of trust, the quiet content —
With open heart, all eager, to your own,
For rest and surcease from its weak lament,—
This with the joy of long-companioned years,
So full of life's sweet things that we have known,
Has taught me more of worth and God's intent,
Than ever I had learnt, or could, alone —
And so, dear heart, from out my soul to you
I render all that's best in me to give —
And, giving, find my heart's desire in this —
As echoing there, it makes life good to live! —

AT EVENING—

Low burns the Sun on the far horizon line —
Intensely burns — then, dying, gives its light
To earth and sky,— and, watching, sees, in turn,
Themselves grow warm and splendid in his sight —

Earth and sky — and the Sunset's afterglow!
Then — earth and sky — and the pure, cool twilight gray,
Like silver-mist, that softens, soothes, subdues
The glaring, fierce intensity of day —

Pale goes the sky — all pale — save one bright
streak

Of yellow, where the Sun has lately passed —
One golden shaft of light that glimmers there,
Then faint and fainter grows, and dies, at last —

O, earth and sky, how *can* you see it go?
That perfect light that, lingering, trembles there
On that dim borderland — the light of dreams
That, dream-like — vanishes, we know not where —

What need to ask — we cannot hold it back —
'Tis only in the soul that light lives on! —
We yearn and hunger for the glow that fades,
Not knowing that all Light and God are one —

And having God, we hold that light that lives
In earth, in sky, on land, and changing sea —
Our souls aglow — the vision does not fade! —
With God's own Light that lives eternally! —

RENUNCIATION

O, God, and must I face this life
With heart insensate, spirit dead
To all the world holds dearest, best,
On which the soul has grown and fed?

Must all my hours be destitute
As this, when stripped of joy and light,
— Alone, devoid of hope or faith —
My soul gropes, cheerless, in the night?

Will all the days begin and end
With grief slow-gnawing at my heart?
And I, in God's big, splendid world,
Walk — silent — sorrowing — apart?

Never to feel her presence here!
Or hold her heart within my own!
Soul-sick — sad — ah! weary — sad
With all the years to plod alone?

Never to feel her soul's caress
Consummate, upon my spirit fall!
Lifting my soul to the touch of God
Through Love that is Spirit and Crown of all.

A glimpse of heaven through human eyes!
A dream of a Summer long since gone by!
Pity, O, God, for a heart like mine,
That wretched and desolate, prays to die!

In the Path of the Gleam

This I said in my aching heart,
As I knelt in the silent church one day,
And murmured a faltering prayer to God —
— Though God and Heaven seemed far away!

When the wonderful sweep of the organ's voice
Broke on the worshippers there —
Thrilled to intenseness the silent aisles,
— And sounded my own despair!

Then dropped to a pitiful, longing cry,
And sobbed like a soul in pain,
While the anguished love, like a mighty flood,
Surged through my heart again!

— I bowed my head before the Tide —
That my strength could not deter —
And in that agony of love
My soul went out to her!

O, God, and is this my destined way?
Must life go on — love cease to be?
Then grant me strength, dear God, I pray
To meet what Thou shalt ask of me!

ETERNITY

The dream is never past, dear,
The song is never done;
The joy that was, will linger,
Though the goal is never won —

When love has touched our heartstrings
And found the tone is true,
He strikes one chord — and listens;
Till it vibrates through and through;

Then he wanders through that Love-Song! —
Which, responsive to his will,
Must echo and re-echo
Till the heart, itself, is still.

There is no end to loving —
— Try to reason as we may —
If we've only seen the Dawning
Of the yet more perfect Day!

If we've heard the little songster,
And we've watched the breaking Day,—
— There will be no end to loving
Till the world shall pass away!

TO —

If you should ever stretch your hand to me
Across that gloom through which no light can lead,
I will not fail you on that darkened way,
Nor question — only let me feel your need.

My hand in yours! — If that could bring you rest,
Or give you strength in hours of blank despair,
Be confident that in the darkest night
You will not have to grope to find it there.

'Tis only in such tender thoughts as these —
Such service, — that our hearts know how to live! —
My hand in yours to lead you! Ah, dear heart,
You cannot know what joy it is to give!

“IN TOUCH WITH THE INFINITE —”

DUSK

When the day slips by, and the twilight gray
Creeps over the earth in its wistful way,
And the world lies hushed to its swooning;
As a tone unsung, or a flower unborn,
Comes the peace of God to the soul withdrawn,
That is mute to His Own attuning! —

SUNRISE —

Triumphant Morn, drenching earth and heaven,
O, Radiant East, with yon Sun-rays riven,
A heaven of joy in my soul is ringing!
Great God of Creation! — too bright — oh, too
 bright,
Breaks the flash of thy Truth o'er my soul's slender
 light,
As humbly it bursts into rapturous singing!

MOTHERHOOD

Soft o'er her features the fire-light is glowing,
Lending a charm,—aye, a wonderful grace
To the love that her eyes and her lips are betraying,
As bending, she kisses the sweet baby face!

Far away — hush! — 'tis a bell sweetly chiming,
Softly it calls through the sunset gleam!
Firelight — and Lovelight — and home all enfolding —
Ah! 'tis a young mother's wonderful dream!

AN ODE TO NATURE

Made by the certain hand of an immortal God —
Perfect modeled from the thoughts of an Artist's
mind —
The one great power in which we see, we feel that
Master touch,
The one great *soul* Companion of mankind.

MEMORY

No matter what the years may hold in store —
Though pleasure's grateful hour may yet be mine —
Grant me, O Lord, one place within my heart,
Where I may kneel at Love's first sacred shrine —

A youthful love it was,— but, faith, how sweet!
A tender spirit straight from heaven sent!
That held within its grasp a gleaming cup
All brimming full with Love's Supreme content!

So chaste a thing, how could the heart forget,
That, most of all, it chose to nestle in!
Ah, no, when that first, vivid gleam has gone,
No heart is ever what it might have been!

And so I ask that in the years to come —
— Though pangs of grief must for these thoughts
atone —

I yet may cherish as a priceless gift,
This love that is the best my life has known!

INTROSPECTION

To give of love is quite the best of life —
Not waiting for that love to us be given —
To love with being loved is easy done —
To love, without, is something nearer heaven! —

UNREST

O, the heart that, pained and lonely,
Craves the thing it holds most dear,
Longing, yearning, calling vainly
To the heart that cannot hear!
O, the anxious, anguished pleading
What a world of love can tell!
And the sad heart wanting always
Something that it loves too well! —

O, the lips that, brave and tender,
All the heart's devotion share;
Asking first, in words unguarded,
What at last they ask in prayer.
O, the soul that, faint and weary,
Sinks beneath a torturing fear,
Lest, at least, it lose forever,
Something that it holds too dear!

INEFFICIENCY

I want so much to speak to you
A word — a thought — convincing,— true —
To give a somewhat better view
Of life to you!

But what am I,—with eyes so blind —
That I, myself, should seek to find
The message that could grip the mind
Of all mankind! —

I have so often longed to go
To some wise man, who, patient, slow
Should tell me all I want to know,
And learn it, so! —

I wish that I could speak to you
The wondrous words, unerring, true
To bring a dearer, closer view
Of God to you! —

TO —

Heart that I love and, loving, deem full worthy
Of my trust and deep affection's constant thought,
Draw close, and by your blessed presence near me
Still this restless longing in my heart.

I do not ask to touch you, see you, hear you,
Only to speak in silence with your soul —
To feel again that holy, close communion —
— That my heart,— at rest in yours,— has
reached its goal.

Draw nearer, soul of mine, until your nearness
Complete and full, enfolds my spirit here,—
And I shall feel in that ecstatic moment
The Soul's eternity, through Love, made clear! —

Though I know that in this world I cannot claim
you —
That through my life your presence I shall miss —
My Soul with yours must always feel its kinship
And heaven could hold no joy more pure than
this! —

And so, when years of calm and quiet feeling
Must teach my heart more moderate delights,
I yet shall know that in its early soaring,
My soul, with yours, has *one* time touched the
heights.

A PICTURE

It was a dull, gray day
In early autumn —
There was nothing save the monotony of sea and
 sky,
Which were — alike — devoid of tone or color —
Stretching away into infinite space
Wherever the eye should turn —
Way, way out, the huge, white crested billows
Rose, and fell and rose again,
Strong, angry, turbulent —
Foaming as they broke and tumbled over each other
In their hurry to reach the mainland —
Nearer and nearer came the white-caps,
Rushing headlong toward the shore,
Until, with a deafening roar,
The big waves dashed upon the white beach,
And broke into tiny ripples
That seethed and hissed as they ran over the pebbles
And fell back again to meet their fellows —
Far out over the waters,
Somewhere in the west —
A solitary ship went on its lonely way through the
 deep —
Rising and sinking with the ceaseless rocking of
 the ocean waves.
Sailing on and on with its cargo
To some far distant port —
Beyond that?
Sea, and sky — and Eternity! —

THE CALL

What is there in the marvel of the dawning,
What is there in the mystery of the sea,
What is there in the twilight's deepening shadows,
That flings its cogent spell o'er you and me?

What,—in the warm defiance of the desert,
What,—in the pine, forlorn and vigilant,
What in the near, deep sound of lapping water,
The souging of the wind, reiterant?

What is there in the fog-horn's dismal warning,
The lonely marshes 'neath the moon-wet sky,—
What is there in the stillness of the Northland?
— God knows — unless — it is — Infinity!

THE CONFLICT

The day was ending, and the brilliant hues
Of setting sun and cloud-reflected light
Made radiant the busy world, untouched,
Unmindful of this sacramental hour.
I sat above the river's cadenced flow
And watched the urgent throng that passed me by,
Bewildered by the thoughts that filled my brain
And held me there, a rapt philosopher.
Such ill-assorted groups, as Night drew on,
Such piteous, striking contrasts, sharp defined —
One world — one life — one God,— the heritage,—
And human lives forever separate.

The man of splendid confidence goes forth
With head erect, and easy, swinging tread
Of one whose muscles readily respond
To brain, alert,— whose promptings, accurate,
A purpose to his every movement lends.
Her hair becombed, her tawdry jewelry
Accentuating signs of weariness,
The little shop girl walks with quickening steps,
Her duty done, rejoicing at release,
And picturing the pleasure of the night.—
The woman — creature,— prodded by her need,
Unkempt, uncaring, destitute, and spent,
Urges her trembling body to its task,
Repulsive in her utter wretchedness;
No want beyond the tragic wish to live,
No concept past the word, necessity; —
A living thing devoid of living thought,

The penalty a sordid life exacts.
The student picks his way among the crowd,
His some-while thoughts agreeably remote,
Avoids the closer touch of human things,
A look of keen annoyance on his face.
Like fireflies at night, the newsboys dart,
With nimble feet, the quicker for the cold,
To earn the needed pennies — daily bread
To them — to those who give, an incident;
Girl and boy haste by, on pleasure bent,
Their arms entwined and chatting happily.—
The veil of Day — dusk-laden — lifts unseen,
The trenchant night life of the world sets in.

The tide is running high,— the balance slips,—
Obstructions there are none, to raise their heads
And thoughtlessly retard the gay pursuit
Of 'wilderer Pleasure,— at her worst and best;
No inconvenient scruples render less
Delightful, to her votaries, the chase.
Protected by the system of the law
The swelling traffic swings its strenuous way;
The thorough-fares agleam with passing lights,
Big cars with men and women, homeward bound;
Soft laughter, eager talk within the glow
Of limousines, soon lost to sound and view
And taken to the City's vibrant heart.
And so it is,— the glittering homes of wealth
Ope wide their doors to some — to some, the house
Of entertainment, palliative, serves;
To some, the indifferent shelter of the street.

In the Path of the Gleam

We never paint the picture as it is,
The theme endures defiant to our brush,
Too big for human handling, largely swayed
By sympathy and prejudice, we lose
The big perspective; faithful it may be,
The vision true, but always incomplete.
Resistless in its power and appeal,
The sweeping current of this human life
Moves on, and moving, gathers to itself
With horrid certainty, like tentacles
Life-sapping and secure, all living things
That stand within the precinct of its reach.
The gurgling waters, ruthless, beckoning,
Bear on their foaming crest, innumerable
Perverted human souls, that cannot seem
To free themselves from such momentum — some
There are, perchance, indifferently adrift,
Who care not whence they come nor where they go,
But, in the main, the struggle wages keen,
The conflict of the Spirit and the Tide;
The Tide that urges onward to the sea,
The heaving ocean of the world's unrest.
Caught by the swirling waters, there can be
Short space for sweet exchange of happy thoughts,
Or helpful words, or meditation sweet;
Scarce time to answer, then abstractedly,
To those, who right and left, cry out in need,
And recognition crave; their cry is heard,
And those who hear, regardless go their way;
Indifferent? No — the current is too swift;
Impossible for those to render aid
Who stand so great in need of aid, themselves;

A slippery foothold is no place for two.
They know their limits well who take this course,
The gift to help is well-nigh past their power;
Confused and helpless, struggling 'neath the yoke
Of a relentless force, they only know
The bondage of the soul; its power to give
To strengthen, to ennoble and to love
A phase it seems beyond them to attain.
It is not choice that makes them turn away;
— A mist that hides a privilege from their sight.—
Let those who judge, go slowly; deeper there,
A need, perhaps, than any they have known.
Life is not simple with these heedless ones,
Look deep into the burning eyes of men;
The urging tide has borne them far from home,
Great ships, without a harbor, on the seas.

The desperate, rushing stream, and by its side,
— For there are such,— the still pools, calm and
deep,

Where skies are mirrored and the stars abound;
Clear depths that give of rest and hope and peace.
A little way removed from all the noise,
The strife, the glitter, and the brilliant sham
Of shallow living, natures such as these
Have held their own against th' infringing tide,
Have lived and worked and worshipped, free to
choose

Between the right and wrong, because they were
Not shackled with this grave, consuming fear;
This fear of things, of people, most of self,
That hangs, a threatening cloud, above the hearts

Of hosts of earnest followers of right,
And keeps them cowards, fight it as they will.
The fear that chokes affection, impulse, thought,
And blurs the truest vision of the soul;
That takes away initiative, and brings
A strange inertia of the mind, that makes
The common daily task a thing to dread;
Destroys ambition, and retards the soul,
In all the big activities of life.
Love points the way, and fear obscures the view;
Where Love encounters Fear, confusion reigns,
For Love and Fear were never yet allied.

The mind that in such bitter conflict lives
Has never known the dignity of life;
Its greatest import has been lost to him;
He has not found its value to himself.
The most tremendous issues life exacts
Involve, in truth, the simplest laws of love;
To this conception wisdom gives her name.
Some souls there are who live by this ideal,
And living, give an excellence to life;
The principles that govern them are born
Of quiet thinking, and, like the still pools,
They mirror, in themselves, the thought of God.
The little pools are conscious of the Tide;
They draw unto themselves, from many sides,
The living stream and send it out again,
Through other channels, deepened, purified,
And thereby keep in touch with all of life.
More fortunate than are their fellow-men,
Such natures know no petty miseries;

Life shows to them broad lines and open space.
To them has come the blessedness of Love,
And through that Love, the gift to understand;
Ability to see, behind the crust
Of human weakness, something to be loved;
The knowledge that the soul is fraught with power
To conquer, and the patience to revive
Within that soul, its own activity,
Clear purpose, wholesome pride, the will to be
A living force. This is the work of Love,
The actualized ideal of Brotherhood.

The sharpest cry of every human soul
Is that for understanding, and, of all
The needs of human life, remains the most
Neglected one, the most unrecognized.
Unconsciously the human heart responds
To sympathy; not pity, thoughtlessly
Conveyed, and tending merely to augment
A certain outward state of things, but which
Admits the inward conflict that gives rise
To such conditions, and profoundly yearns
To penetrate the trouble at its source,
— A function that we cannot well omit
In any phase of life, the need is there;
The teacher, pastor, friend, must recognize
This law eternal, if he would prevail.
Intolerance runs counter to its aim;
Suspended judgment oft averts a crime.

To love, to be of service where we can,
To know that happiness, more truly than

Despondence, proves our fellowship with God,
To keep our thoughts untrammelled, that we may
Be pure enough to understand the child,
And broad enough to comprehend the man;
This is our mission, that we may unite
In charity, the destitute in sin,
The recluse, and the sovereigns of power;
Acknowledging our common heritage,
Awake to our responsibilities,
And to the sacred privilege of life —
Stupendous Life — consummate, holy Life,
Th' incomparable, the princely gift of God.

LOVE TRIUMPHANT

You are tired, little love of mine,
And weary, and sad, and worn;
With your brave little face and your eyes all tense
With the sorrow you have borne.

Come, lay you down, I will pray for rest —
There is nothing more to do —
We have struggled — and waited — and hoped, —
and wept —
— And suffered — I and you —

Let me hold your hand, let me smooth your hair.
Ah, God, I would rather die
Than to see that look in your pallid face —
— We are strong, love, you and I.

Let us try not to think of the all we have missed,
But think of the much we have had —
When skies were blue, and our hearts as clear
As the spring bird's song is glad! —

Think how we have gone, love, hand in hand,
In every kind of weather;
The flowers we have picked, the ways we have
found,
The heights we have climbed together —

The flowers — we sometimes felt their thorns —
The paths — they would go astray —
But, you, with the sun-gold on your hair,
Ah, love, you would lead the way —

And down through the deep, green woods we
trudged,
And up to the road once more —
And I had no care for the way we took
When Love went on before —

O, think of that strangest of all Life's hours —
We stood on the peaks of Dawn,
And I held my breath as you bade me look
In the face of the coming morn!

I looked,— O, you, glorious, breaking Day!
I looked — but I saw no thing
Save a rose-flushed sky and the golden path
Of a swallow on the wing.

— Till there, in the hush of that mystic morn
You stood in the shimmering light,
Your eyes like the luminous, veiled stars
And your wings all spotless white.

You summoned my soul when your lips touched
mine,
— Ah, love, in the crimson gleam! —
And you gave it the fulness of life more fine
Than ever the poets dream.

I looked on the world with a soul new-born,
The slumbering world below,—
And I knew that I never should walk again
In the ways that I used to know.

— Life is fair, love, and all you have done
Not anything can undo —
I can think big thoughts and dream big dreams
Because you have taught me to —

So, why should we fear, love? — Life is real,
We have suffered, perhaps, as few —
But rest you, now,— though our day is done,
Thank God for the gift of you! —

DREAM-LIFE

Just to lie awake at nights and think and think
Of all the many things you long to do!
Pursuing every fancy where it leads,
With never a hope of dream thoughts coming true!

And then to feel the night wind in your face —
The magic South Wind with its thrilling touch,
Sweet with the breath of roses wet with dew,
And bending lilies, perfumed over-much.

To watch the curtains moving with the breeze;
The shifting shadows of the latticed light —
To feel the murmur of a life profound
In the myriad voices calling through the night.

To kneel beside the silvered window-ledge,
And — hush! — till Nature's heart shall speak
 anew;
Then breathe into your life that wondrous joy
You know when once she gives herself to you —

Soft the voice of the night wind in the trees! —
Pregnant with thoughts of things far — far away.
Whether of mystic coasts — or dusky dawns —
Or wings against the sky — ah, who shall say? —

The hallowed moon-mist drenches all the land;
Save where the shadows lie, obscure and deep —
Each flower fills its chalice deep with dew,
Then, drunk with moisture, nodding, falls asleep.

In the Path of the Gleam

From somewhere near at hand, when winds are
still,

I hear the "clish — clish — clinkle" of a stream;
And think I see the meadows, quiet and lone,—
A mirage in the vista of a dream!

The white rose sighs its petals to the wind,—
The moon — superbly clear — is at its height —
Its stepping-stones, the stars, in faithful trust
Burn brightly on the Altar of the Night.

In the sanctity of silent hours like these
How close we draw to the pulsing Heart of
Things!
That Mother-heart, that beats to a world-old
strain,
Yet throbs with the reckless joy of Eternal Springs.

To close your eyes, and feel the wind with strange,
Disquieting softness, touch your brow and hair;
Then woo you to a dream-world all its own,
And leave you, in the lone hours, sleeping there.

And, think you, these are foolish thoughts and
vague?
— Yet not so strange as Life,— and Time — and
Space —
— And Souls that love! the Mystery of these
Alone reveals the glory of His Face!

In the Path of the Gleam

'Tis Truth of Truths, the wisdom of the soul;
And what we feel is more than touch or sight —
Be wise to "watch the lilies as they grow,"
To muse upon the beauty of the Night! —

CARISSA, FLIRTING

(An excerpt from "June in Italy")

CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE DUKE DE CASTELLANO — (A Florentine, and owner of the Villa Lemanti, on Lake Como. He is in love with Carissa, and has invited her to-night to a sumptuous entertainment given at the Villa.)

PIETRO — (Peasant, and devoted lover of Carissa — He is jealous of the duke's attentions to her, and, for that reason, follows her to the ball, unknown to her.)

CARISSA — (A beautiful girl of eighteen, intelligent — wholly captivating and, for the time being, madly in love with the duke.)

SCENE

A side balcony of a magnificent Italian Villa,— overlooking a garden, dream-like in the soft glow of myriad hanging lights. From the low window at the back comes the sound of music and laughter, and one sees in the distance, a gay company moving to and fro.

CARISSA (*glancing down suddenly, and seeing, to her intense surprise, PIETRO standing just below her, she speaks indignantly*):

Begone, Pietro, what could bring you here?

I have no looks nor smiles for you this night —

The Duke de Castellano — for 'tis he

In the Path of the Gleam

Who brought me here — will see me home again,
For you I have no need, nor liking, more —
— 'Twas yesterday I loved you, that is past —
Enough of foolish words twixt you and me! —

(Petulantly.)

You came this way, perhaps,— O, yes, you did —
To tell me I must leave this happy throng,

(Looking off dreamily.)

The sensuous music and the play of light,
The dancing and the laughter and the wine,
Soft words amid the garden's grateful gloom

(Looking back at him rather scornfully)

To follow you — who — love me — best — of
all!

True, I have ofttimes followed you before
Into the night,— that, one time, held such joy
For both of us — for then it was enough

To hear your voice — to sit with you apart
From every other joy the night could bring —
But now, Pietro, is my heart quite free
From all its past desires concerning you —
To night I think I love no earthly thing —

(Stretching her arms to the night, rapturously)

I want to live — oh, how I want to live!

I feel a tip-toe with this wild desire!

(Turning back to PIETRO, irritably)

Begone, Pietro, for I have no time

For anything so commonplace as you!

*(She waves her fan toward him and turns to leave,
when she notices that his face is very white,
and that his eyes glitter menacingly, as he*

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stares into the lighted room beyond — it frightens her,— she turns, and leaning gently, almost intimately, toward him, continues)

Pietro, what a foolish boy you are,—
How easy 'tis to tease you! are you then
No surer of my love than thus to heed
Such foolish words from lips more foolish still,
And look as though you'd strike me if you
could? —

(She looks toward the house, then back at him)
Or someone else, perhaps? — ah, how I like
To see your eyes deep-smoldering with fire,
The look of hatred for the thing you think
I love — why is it that it takes such warmth
Of feeling on your part to prove to me
More surely than your words have ever done
How splendid is the love you offer me!

(His eyes soften — She touches him with her hand, then places her hand on her heart)

Pietro, there is no one here but you —
I loved you yesterday, I love you now.

PIETRO: Carissa, is it really as you say?

CARISSA: Come, kiss me —

(She recoils a little but lets him kiss her.)
I would linger if I could,
But, as you know, the duke is powerful,
And should he find you here with me, alone,
Unhappiness would follow from this night,
And what is ours could never be again —

(She kisses a flower, and gives it to him.)
Pietro, take this flower from my lips,

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And come not back to-night, nor wait for me;
To-morrow you will come and all shall be
Just as you wish it — as we both desire —
Until that time my heart is all your own,
And every thought directed to that hour.

(She goes toward the window and passes through, then turns and blows him a kiss. He looks puzzled and disappointed, but smiles and obeys her.)

PIETRO (*walking away slowly*):

A winsome thing, and not to be denied —
And dearer to my heart than life itself!
So lovely was she standing in that light,
Her shoulders white and gleaming and her
face —

— A rose — aglow with her great love for
me —

(He stops, thinking)

But something of her way I did not like —
What was it? some anxiety to leave,
As though her thoughts were not entirely mine, —
— Not quite herself — I think I shall remain
Here in these shadows where my eyes can see
Her, as she moves about and when she leaves.

(He stands, looking toward the house, not very far from the place where she left him.)

CARISSA (*thinking he has gone, stands just within the lighted hallway laughing softly*):

Ah, ha, my brave Pietro, if you must
My every footstep follow, then I, too,
Can play a game to thwart you at the start.
My life, my love — are mine, and you shall see
I hold the right to give them as I will —

Good-night,— good-bye — how little do I care
When next we meet! — my heart is light as air.

The music sets my dancing thoughts afire —

(Looks in the direction of the ball-room)

And happy with excitement I shall stand
And smile and wait for him to come and touch
Me gently on the arm, and ask me why
I left him as I did, and search my eyes
For something that he wants — with his so deep,
So tender, I could die with loving him!

*(She takes a breath excitedly, for she sees the
duke coming quickly toward her — she smiles,
teasingly.)*

THE DUKE *(looking at her happily)* :

My faith! you gave me such a start — I
feared —

— I thought perhaps you'd run away again!

You left me once, you know, in such a mood

Of teasing — I remember well that night

And how you hurt me, little butterfly!

You could not do that now I have you here —

So brief the joy we've known until this hour!

CARISSA *(happy, but still in a mood to flirt,
looks up at him innocently)* :

Your eyes are speaking, and your words are
fraught

With tender meaning, Sir, I beg you stop

Before my heart shall traitor be to me

And lead me where 'twere best I should not be —

*(She looks away from him, as if embarrassed,
then suddenly, and daringly, glances up at him,
and laughing, swiftly runs past him out onto*

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the balcony, down the steps and into the garden, too quickly for him to catch her,— she barely has time to hide to the side of the marble staircase, before he passes her, and, calling her name softly, steps, cautiously, into the moonlit garden.)

CARISSA: *(ecstatically, though a little breathless)*

Can happiness of this sort ever last?

I think life never was so sweet before —

(She unconsciously holds out her arms to him as she sees him looking for her among the shadows.)

Ah, how I love you!

(Dropping her arms suddenly)

Can I trust myself?

'Twere sweeter now to leave him — I will go —

(She turns, and runs along a little walk that leads to the back of the Villa and brings her finally to a side gate, through which, laughing softly to herself, she passes on her way out, and — what she thinks is to be — her way home.)

YOUTH AND WISDOM

YOUTH. And this, you say, is Life.

WISDOM. Yea, this is Life.

YOUTH. The best and least of it?

WISDOM. That I have known.

YOUTH. This accident of birth,— ?

WISDOM. You know that much?

A pompous little phrase, to say the least,
That would imply more knowledge of the fact
It states than either you or I can boast.
This accident of birth? —

YOUTH Delivers us
Some here, some there, into this maelstrom
Of ideas, furious and variant;
Convulsive waves of human thought, by which
Through forces, sinister and undefined,
The world is rocked like bottles in a sea.
And this, untempered to the waking mind,
We mutely face — to solve it as we may!

WISDOM. It is our natural environment.

YOUTH. By which you mean?

WISDOM. Such forces must begin *
And can be made to end within ourselves.
You have not made companion of your soul,
For therein lies your power to master them.

YOUTH. An, that be true, by what strange alchemy
Can we induce the soul to liberate
The true dissolvent for the acid test?
That law is false that cannot be applied.

* A change from the original.

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WISDOM. My son, it has been said — but, follow
on,—

What thought is making tumult in your mind?
YOUTH. I cannot seem to think. I only know

That face to face with Life, it seems immense
With tragedy — of birth —, and death — and
most

What falls between — great loves that will not
die

But feed upon the heart's vitality,
And kindle there a swift, enduring pain.
Great fires in the soul that eat their way
Through brain and heart and body, and destroy
All evidence of what was once a man.

The heart-springs taut with jealous reasonings,
Whose poison, moving through the blood, pro-
vokes

A sickness in the brain — and takes away
All kindness from life.

WISDOM. The eyes of youth
Are filled with images distortionate.

YOUTH. I see what you have shown me, nothing
more.

WISDOM. But something less. You picture what
is true,

What more do you record?

YOUTH The weariness

Of minds that having battled to achieve,
Have faced the hidden wall of futility;
Have seen ambition die, and pride fall back
Upon the sick man's creed — "LIFE IS NOT
FAIR" —

The biting, sickening stabs of memory —

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The hopeless yearnings and the smothered hurts.
The smoldering depths of passion unallayed,
That, like the nervous brute thing held in leash,
Grows ugly with the idea of restraint,
And strains at the endurance of the mind
As he, the slender rope that tethers him.
Tumultuous, throbbing, soul-born impulses
That dare to reach beyond the commonplace,—
Fair, winged thoughts that find their way to
 heaven,
Only to fall back sobbingly to earth.
Ideals shattered — disillusionment —
— I shrink from the complexity of Life.

WISDOM. You think of Life as complex — so it is.
'Tis we, ourselves, who make it so. To see
Life in the emerald light of tragedy
Reveals a faulty vision. Most of us
Prefer this hue, and, through this tendency,
Ourselves achieve the soul's imprisonment.
You speak of love.— I wonder if you know
How many despicable impostors
The heart accepts in that disguise before
The soul awakes — and, if it never does,
So much of heaven has been denied to us.
This much we know — whatever else it is,
Love is the ONLY door to Happiness! —
The Silencer of Self, it lifts the veil,
And bids us look upon Divinity.
For Love is of Infinitude, and draws
From those pure depths, their certainty and peace.

YOUTH. You speak in words I cannot understand.

WISDOM. For Love, the Refiner, has not chastened
 you.

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And to that Love you have attributed
A passion which is death, and jealousy.
The offspring of emotion, jealousy
Has never claimed relationship with Love,
But dealing with Love's counterfeits, inflicts
Its torture on the uninitiate.
That passion is an attribute of love
Is certain — but, eliminated, does
In no sense render more intangible
The beauty and the sacredness of love.
This crude Recalcitrant that masquerades,
And calls itself a natural law of man,
Is but an evil image of the brain
Designed to please our weak humanity —
Whose poisoned fangs have left their vicious
mark

Upon mankind; and, soon or late, the world
Will feel the grim convulsions that attend
A 'stablished law uprooted — and deny
This travesty upon God's Higher Law.

YOUTH. You much astonish me. Your theories,
— We know that there are facts —

WISDOM. There are no facts
That do not fall within the radius
Of God's Laws. What I say to you is not
From theory — I tell you what I know.
— A soul's experience — and nothing less.
In Wisdom's name, I cannot tell you more.

YOUTH. I feel the truth of what you say,— go on.

WISDOM. The positive laws of life are spiritual,
And have their origin in God — by whose
Intent — more practical than ours — they reach
To every daily commonplace of life,

Amazing us by their efficiency! —
We violate them, and by every law
Of nature, we must pay the penalty.
The most of our unhappiness, it seems,
Is due to lack of clear intelligence
About these laws. A truth half-mastered soon
Becomes an evil factor in the mind.
Imperfect seeds are planted, and we find
That, even though the soil is good, the seed
Will die, or else produce deformity.
How shall the human mind accomplish more? —
We do not take the hardest way from choice;
I think we do not try to understand.
Our sufferings are the fruits of selfishness.
We make the laws that govern us, because
They seem best suited to the human race;
And when th' inevitable injury is done —
— The lark was never born to fill the cage —
We wonder why a life so miserable
Should, of necessity, be lived at all.
This great, chaotic struggle, and the stern
Pathetic efforts finally to reach
Familiar ways, are evidence enough
That, somewhere, in our scheme of government,
Some fundamental need has been ignored
For which we have not found a substitute.
YOUTH. A fact that needs no proof. You indicate
Of course, the need of God in man's affairs;
But, tell me, what is there within ourselves,
Attests our kinship with Divinity?
WISDOM. The pearl of righteousness that lies deep
hid
Is God's Own Seal upon the souls of men.

We may deny,— but cannot alter it ;
And all our questioning,— thank God — cannot
Erase His Holy Signature. A bit
Of earthiness removed — a steady hand —
A vigil — and the precious goal is won.
My son, it is not easily attained ;
There's agony, and darkness, and despair,
And strangling fear, that threatens to destroy ;
The arms that we have learned to lean upon
Must be withdrawn. Our very selves must pass
Before our eyes, detached, disqualified
And impotent. There is no common bond
Between His laws and ours — and ours must go
Irrevocably, before we can receive
In least degree, those Higher principles
Of living — and when once it is revealed
To us, what Life, in its essentials, IS,
There is no sacrifice we will not make
A stepping-stone towards it — for we know
That only through its rousing certainties
Do souls of men approach to happiness !
It has been said that he who lets his soul
Drink deep from these great Fountain-heads of
Life
Bears on his brow the Insignia of Peace.
And truly it is so. A man may hide
His thoughts, but not his mode of thinking. He
Who dwells among the Templed Verities
Reflects their tranquil glory in his face.
“ The amber depths of mellowed consciousness
A-glow from the auroral fires of God.”
YOUTH. How mystical ! But what are we to do
To fit ourselves for life such as you have

Portrayed? What attitude of mind is it
Essential to acquire, to compass it?
What must we feel — repentance? — meekness?
— faith?

WISDOM. Our personal responsibility —
YOUTH. To Life?

WISDOM. Why, yes, to life; — and thence, to God
Who gave it. We do not appreciate
Sufficiently the possibilities
There are in us for service — rather, our
Reflections drift in dark, uncharted ways
Because we do not fully comprehend
The great, constructive principles of life.
— The depth and breadth of it — for all the joy
And beauty there is in life, lies in our
Acceptance of these rich, inspiring Facts.
It is through them, alone, my son, that we
Can ever hope to understand ourselves,
And — thereby — make life somewhat less com-
plex

For others. When God gave us life, He put
Into us all, the right and power to live
It well — the power to master every law
That stands between ourselves and Him. What
more

Can we fall heir to? Shall we use this power?
We have the right — It is our heritage —
His laws or ours? By our experience,
We know what ours accomplish. Do we know
What His can do? “The future shall unfold
Before us like a book we love to read.
Absorbing in its great activities,
Abiding in its lofty undertone

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Of quietness and strength. Sweet with the light
Of April dawns, and tender with the glow
Of loving." Now, my son, this is my own
Interpretation of the picture that
You look upon — accept it as you will.
Look for yourself — I show you what I see.
In wisdom's name, I cannot show you more.

YOUTH. I understand. And this — you say —
is Life! —



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